

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ANTANA 01549 261414Z
ACTION AF-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANTANANARIVO 1549

E.O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: PORS, MA
SUBJECT: SUPREME REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (SRC) ACTS AGAINST
LAWLESSNESS

REFS:: (A) ANTANANARIVO 1084; (B) ANTANANARIVO 1433

1. SUMMARY. AUGUST 26 PRESS ANNOUNCED THAT SRC HAD AT ITS
AUGUST 24 MEETING DEVOTED CONSIDERABLE TIME TO THE PROBLEM
OF COMBATING THE WAVE OF LAWLESSNESS AND CRIME WHICH
HAS BEEN OF INCREASING CONCERN IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS (REF A).
END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDED BY PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA, THE SRC DECIDED:

(A) TO CHANGE THE PENAL CODE TO FACILITATE THE JUDICIAL
PURSUIT OF KNOWN GANGS OF MISCREANTS. THE CHANGES WERE NOT
SPECIFIED BUT IT WAS NOTED THAT AT PRESENT THESE GANGS CAN
ONLY BE PROSECUTED FOR PLANNING CRIMES AND NOT FOR PLANNING
MISDEMEANORS AGAINST PERSONS OR PROPERTY;

(B) TO FORBID THE WEARING OF ANY CLOTHING RESEMBLING
UNIFORMS, AS SOME LAWBREAKERS HAVE DONE IN ORDER TO
FOOL THEIR VICTIMS;

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 ANTANA 01549 261414Z

(C) TO EXPAND THE RIGHT OF SELF DEFENSE;

(D) TO AUTHORIZE THE APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 16 OF
THE CONSTITUTION TO PERSONS RECOGNIZED AS BEING A DANGER
TO SOCIETY. THIS WOULD PERMIT THE PLACING UNDER HOUSE
ARREST OR THE ASSIGNMENT TO A SPECIFIED PLACE OF
RESIDENCE OF KNOWN CRIMINALS AND MISCREANTS WITHOUT THE

NEED FOR JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS.

2. COMMENT: THIS IS FIRST SERIOUS CONCRETE STEP BY GOVERNMENT TO ACT AGAINST WAVE OF BANDITRY, MOSTLY PETTY THEFT BUT INCLUDING SOME MORE SERIOUS CRIMES, WHICH HAS BEEN THE SOURCE OF INCREASING CONCERN IN ANTANANARIVO AND COUNTRYSIDE. DAILY MADAGASCAR MATIN, FOR INSTANCE, HAS BEEN WIDELY REPORTING CASES OF THEFT BY GANGS IN BROAD DAYLIGHT IN MIDDLE OF CITY MARKET. MANY FOREIGNERS, INCLUDING THREE PERSONS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS EMBASSY, HAVE HAD JEWELRY, CLOTHING, AND HANDBAGS SNATCHED FROM THEM. GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN AWARE OF THIS PROBLEM, AS EVIDENCED BY PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA'S REFERENCE TO IT IN HIS AUGUST 5 SPEECH ANNOUNCING THE NEW CABINET (REF B), AND ITS SUCCESS IN DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT COULD HELP GENERATE FOR HIS GOVERNMENT SOME OF THE GENUINE POPULAR SUPPORT WHICH IT SO FAR LACKS, PARTICULARLY IN ANTANANARIVO. IT IS ONE OF THE AREAS IN WHICH ITS PERFORMANCE WILL HELP DETERMINE ITS LONGEVITY. BARRETT

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